

# Turkey

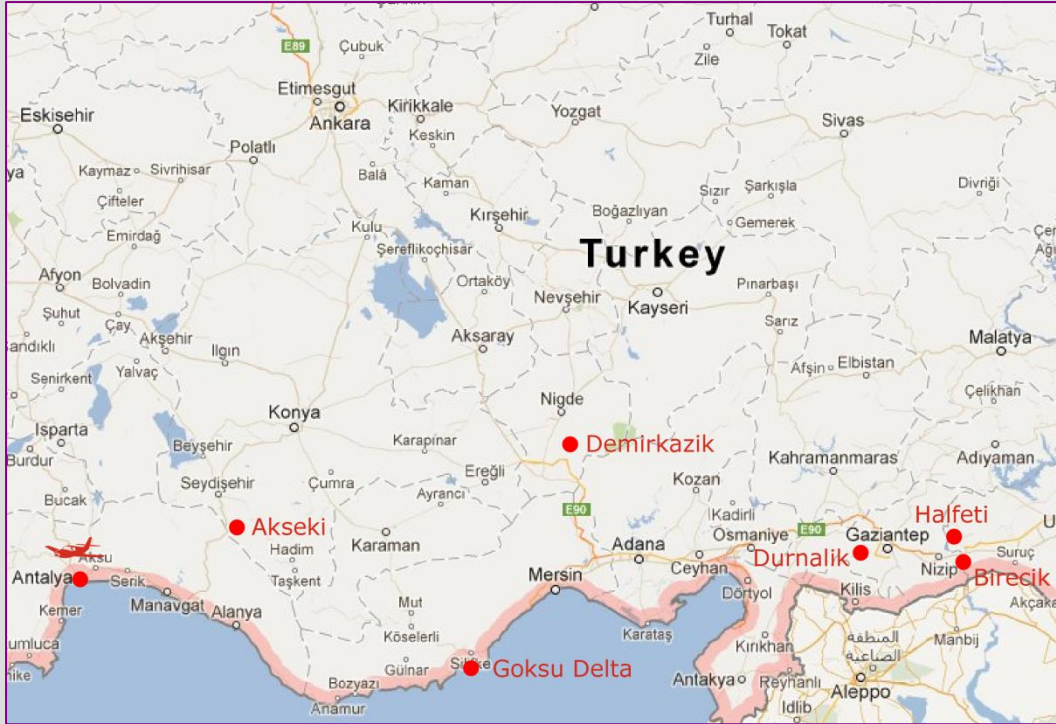


## South-east



6<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2012





Wednesday 6th	Journey from Antalya to Cukurbag	8.00 – 20.00
Thursday 7th	Demirkazik Mountain Chromium Mines Demirkazik Gorge	5.00 - 10.30 13.00 - 16.00 16.00 - 19.00
Friday 8 <sup>th</sup>	Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi Gulhane's Tea House, Birecik	7.00 - 10.30 18.45 - 20,00
Saturday 9 <sup>th</sup>	Birecik Ibis Wadi Birecik Gravel Pits	6.00 – 13.30
Sunday 10 <sup>th</sup>	Halfeti Yeniakpinar	6.00 - 12.00 17.00 - 20.00
Monday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Durnalik Track South of Birecik	6.30 - 11.30 17.00 - 19.00
Tuesday 12 <sup>th</sup>	Birecik Gravel Pits Goksu Delta	6.15 - 9.30 17.00 - 19.15
Wednesday 13 <sup>th</sup>	Goksu Delta Akseki	6.15 - 10.00 17.30 - 19.45
Thursday 14th	Forest East of Akseki Forest North of Akseki Akseki graveyard	6.00 - 10.00 11.30 - 14.00

# SOUTH-EAST TURKEY

6<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2012

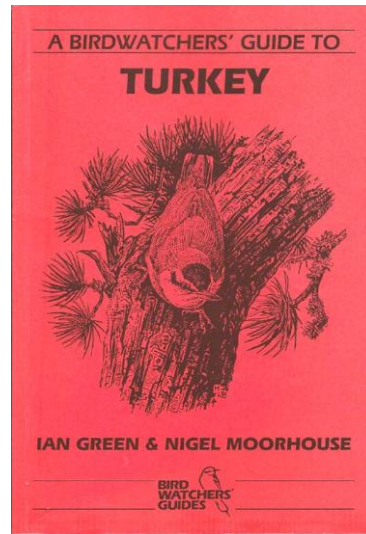
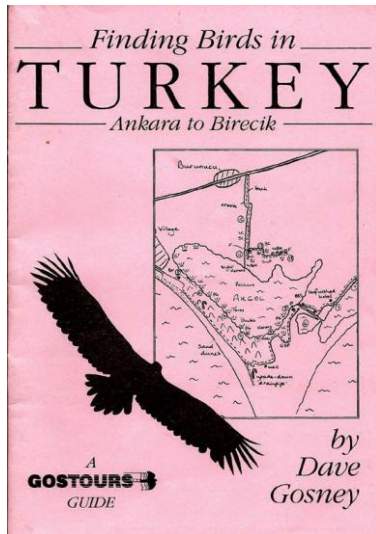
## Introduction

Anyone who has looked at a map of Turkey will realise that it is a very large country in relation to many of the others in Europe and the Middle East. Many trips here therefore concentrate on the South and South-east (if they are here for a week as we were), or also include the North-east if they are here for longer. The itinerary thus needed to take into account the distances which needed to be eaten up in the hire car, and also the main sites which we wanted to visit. Birecik seems to be a favourite with the trip reports, and while there are some good birds to be found there, my impression was that it was a busy place with traffic and people around many of the sites. Yet it has to be included. Another "must see" on reports is Caspian Snowcock in the southern central mountains, but we also found that there was much more to this than one species, including extra good birds and stunning scenery. With the cheapest and most convenient flight being to Antalya along the South coast, we planned the longest journey on the first day to the mountains, then on to Birecik for a few days, and more or less using the Goksu Delta and Akseki as stop off points on the return. The former suited its purpose and added a few wetland habitat birds to the list, but the latter also offered yet more good birding and excellent scenery – Akseki should be considered on any trip if possible.



All arrangements were made independently, although we did get some verbal and email outline guidance from Kerem Ali Boyla (kerem@birdwatchturkey.com). To be fair, they represent a group of Turkish birders who make a living from guiding around the sites, and we made it clear from the outset when we met them at the Rutland Water Bird Fair that we wanted to do the sites ourselves – we know this means fewer species but increases our enjoyment of the trip by finding the birds ourselves. Flights were originally from Glasgow, but Thomas Cook played around with the flights without informing us, and we got them to switch to Manchester the day earlier without extra cost. This proved to be hugely beneficial, since the original flight landed at 1am, meaning a lack of sleep before the long journey to the mountains. The new flight landed at 20:00, which gave plenty of time to collect the baggage and car, and find the airport hotel and have a good night's sleep before departing. We booked the airport hotel and the accommodation with tractor trips at Cukurbag in advance – the former for better prices, the latter to ensure there would be spaces (as it happened, we were the only ones in the small Ozsafak pension during our stay). We had been informed by Kerem that May and June are amongst the best times of year to visit, and we did see many birds still singing. There will obviously be some species or groups which are better to see at other times, but June seemed to serve its purpose well. Our overall impression was that there were marginally fewer species to be seen on our visit as compared to other reports for the same time of year

(an impression only, and some other reports may have been more interested in totting up species lists). For those who need to know what to pack to suit the weather, the only cloud we saw was in the mountains on the first two days (when it was cool on the tractor ride for the snowcocks – about 5°C is supposed to be the average), but everywhere else was very hot – high 20's to a peak of 42°C in Birecik.



Strangely, there seem to only old guides with maps to the sites – notably by Dave Gosney (Birdguides) and Green & Moorhouse (“A Birdwatcher’s Guide to Turkey”, published by Prion). Despite these being about 20 years old, much of the information is still pertinent. However, there are predictably some changes to those days, mainly to newer roads being constructed, but also to some habitats being lost (such as the sand pits behind the Merkalem Hotel in Birecik). That being said, they should still be considered as a sound basis for touring the area. We also found some of the information from other reports on the internet to be useful, mainly due to more up to date facts.

### Car Hire

We hired a car from the UK online, using Budget. They are an interesting bunch to find at the airport, since you have to exit the international arrivals, re-enter the domestic departures (including security screen) to access the car hire firms at domestic arrivals. We had ordered a Renault Fluence to accommodate our cases and equipment, but were offered a Ford Focus as a size equivalent. A bit of haggling bought a Ford Mondeo with a larger diesel engine instead for an extra TL200.

The main roads in Turkey between the sites are from good to excellent – the latter including the new toll motorways. Beware of the latter. Before approaching a toll booth for the first time, pull the car in to the right just before to the service kiosk and buy a card for the duration of the journey. The toll booths seem to ONLY accept these swipe cards. The availability of fuel is at great variance from the reports we read – petrol stations seem to be almost everywhere, and can occur in groups. Fuel cost is not cheap – not far off that in the UK.

### Accommodation

Due to some changes in our flights, we landed at 20:30 instead of 00:30 in the morning, which resulted in a much more composed and relaxing search for the IC airport hotel, which is a two minute drive from the airport. Not particularly cheap at 155 Euros, it is comfortable and easy to find, with a price that includes breakfast.

**Ozsafak Pension** ([ozsafak@hotmail.com](mailto:ozsafak@hotmail.com) or [website adress www.ozsafak.net](http://www.ozsafak.net))

Ozsafak and Safak pensions are on the opposite sides of the road to each other in Cukurbag (East of Camardi), and are owned by the same family. We sent an email to both, and went for the former since their replies were the only ones we had. These were



from Basar Safak, the son of the former owner, Ali. He also doubled as the guide on the tractor trip up to Demirkazik Mountain. The rooms cost us 30 euros per person per night with dinner and breakfast. The tractor trip was an extra 120 euros total for the three people. There is an additional benefit to 21<sup>st</sup> century of free wifi here.



*Ozsafak Pension*



*Merkalem Motel*

### **Merkalem Motel, Birecik**

Birecik is a lot larger than expected, and may well have a lot more hotels and motels than when the first reports were written. However, this motel is very easy to find – the last building before crossing the bridge over the Euphrates – so we took the easy way out and plumped for here. We were offered a triple room for TL75 per night for three nights, but managed to negotiate two separate rooms for a total of TL220 for the duration. The rooms are basic but comfortable with temperamental air conditioning.

### **Hotel Fatih, Tasucu**

Tasucu is the best base for the Goksu Delta, since it is only 2km or so from the western access, and offers a variety of accommodation due to its resort status. We plumped for the Hotel Faith, found easily on the left of the main road passing West through the town. The charge was reasonable at TL90 for a triple room. This was clean, had sufficient space, as well as working air conditioning and free wifi. There are also quite a few restaurants a short walk away next to the harbour.



*View from the rear of the Fatih*



*Akseki from the Star Hotel*

### **Star Hotel, Akseki**

There are a couple of hotels in Akseki, found by driving up through the main street (with pine trees down the centre), then taking a right at the top. We checked the Duruk Hotel first to be offered a triple room for TL200. The Star Hotel, which had ambivalent press in

some of the reports, was just as good, but with 2 rooms for a total of TL105 – breakfast included! The son of the owner who dealt with us was pleasant and spoke reasonable English (his dad doesn't speak much of the language but was also very accommodating). In addition, the rooms had air conditioning, free wifi, and we were okay to stay until mid afternoon the next day. We also tried for a meal at the restaurant below the hotel - the buffet offerings were somewhat limited.

## DIARY

### Antalya to Cukubag

(Day 1)

This was to be THE day of travelling – Google directions excitedly mapped out a journey of 8 hours and 40 minutes from Antalya to our target of Cukurbag. While we didn't reach the pension until 10½ hours later, this was in part due to some excellent birding during part of the journey. If we hadn't stopped, it's likely that we would have spent more like 7 hours or so on the road.

The journey was very varied, passing through 4 distinct phases:

- From Antalya to the turn off to the North just after Manavgat on the coast road was busy, sprawling, and uninteresting
- More or less as soon as we left this coast road, we gained altitude through some impressive montane areas. The views were good enough to sustain interest on their own, but one or two decent birds were also thrown in – kicked off by a handsome male Black-eared Wheatear, this was the only area where we saw Blue Rock Thrushes on the journey



*Montane area North of coast road*



*Plains on the road to Konya*

- The trip from Seydisehir to just South of Nigde, which was the main part of the journey, was through monotonous and on the whole boring flat arable land, with very few birds to show (Hoopoe during our sandwich break was the highlight)
- We decided to take a minor road from the South of Nigde to Camardi, which ran West to East, and took what was probably a much better birding road than the two suggested from the Ozsafak Pension directions

All of the best birding of the day was spent on this road, and this started almost as soon as we joined it, with Lesser Grey Shrikes, Corn Bunting and larks along the way. One of the best spots was about two thirds of the way along, in open upland, where we kept



stopping for 5 different species of larks, of which Bimaculated Lark was the most obvious, and possibly also the most numerous. Black-headed Buntings were also common here, with Isabelline Wheatear verging on the abundant. A group of Rock Sparrows continued to be mobile, but mammalian interest in the form of European Ground Squirrels were much more approachable.



*Hills to the West of Camardi*



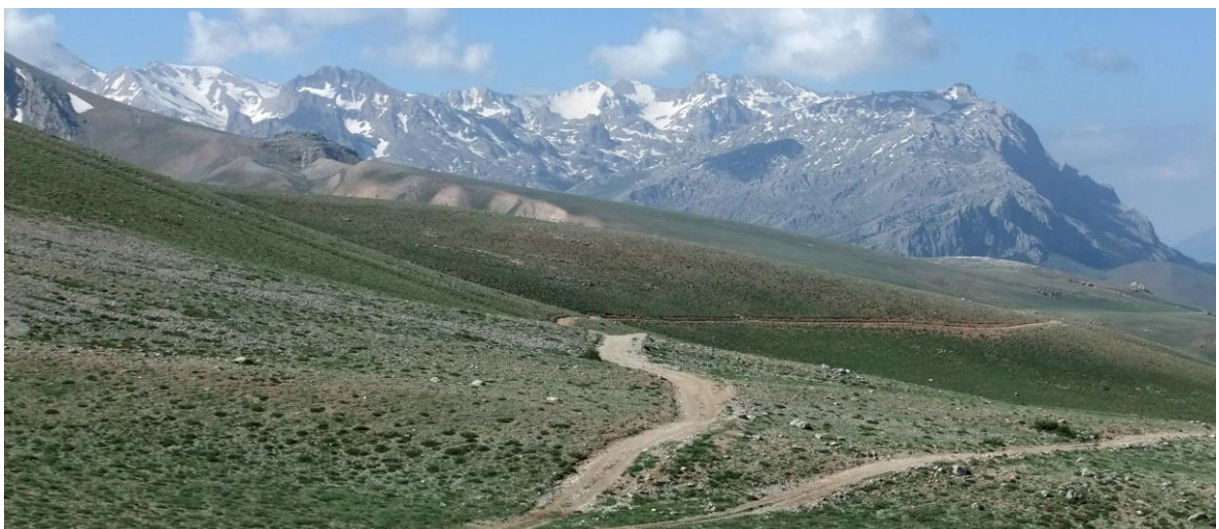
*Demirkazik Gorge*

When we arrived at the Ozsafak Pension, Basar enticed us with the idea of potential Wallcreeper, Golden Eagle, and other juicy morsels at the Demirkazik Gorge, which is only a 5 minute drive along the road. The setting is something special, with the late afternoon light forming a warm glow on the gorge. The routine was to walk 20 minutes or so into the gorge, and then back, before losing the light. Almost as soon as we left the car we were greeted by a trio of Western Rock Nuthatches. Eastern Rock Nuthatches were more common within the gorge itself. Star performer of the early evening was a Golden Eagle, which couldn't escape the attention of the marauding Lesser Kestrels and Choughs. It appeared at one time with a branch in its talons – who knows why, since it carried this around for some time seemingly without purpose!

### **Demirkazik Mountain**

*(Day 2)*

One of the characteristic birds on a visit to Turkey is Caspian Snowcock, and so most trips here visit the Demirkazik area to locate them. They were probably first put on the birding map over 20 years ago, when Ali Safak started taking birders up to the higher meadows on the back of a tractor. His brother Hassan then followed suit, and they founded the Safak Pensions (opposite each other just outside of Camardi, in the village of Cukurbag). Ali unfortunately died a couple of years ago, leaving the business in the capable hands of son Basar. Thus it was that we were woken up at 3.45 am, which in itself was a good sign, since rain had threatened to curtail this morning's visit. As it





turned out, the skies were clear. We drove to the track where the tractor was parked, and were then ferried up (on cushioned seats in the trailer I have to say!) the dirt track, a journey which only took about 30-40 minutes, and wasn't quite as hellish as we had been led to believe.



We arrived at the meadows below the high peaks at just after 5am, and the temperature was also warmer than expected (although gloves and a couple of layers were preferable). We chose the option of walking back down to the car later, so the tractor made its way back down, leaving us with a very short uphill walk to gaze longingly at the peaks above (after first notching off Radde's Accentor). The Snowcock could be heard as soon as we stopped, and we were sure we could pick out exactly where on the slopes above they were located. However, it took some time to locate the first pair – in the selfsame place that we had predicted – with the aid of a small group of Alpine Ibexes which were close by. The initial views bagged, we then saw a pair plummeting sideways with the impression of a passing aeroplane as they landed somewhere distant, and a fifth bird was picked up much lower down (almost our elevation) but a couple of hundred metres away.

This spot was also excellent for other higher altitude specialities. One of my long time wants, Wallcreeper, was seen flying adjacent to the rock faces above. A Crimson-winged Finch or two flew tantalisingly past a few times, occasionally landing briefly on the rock stacks to our side. Blue Rock Thrushes and Snowfinches were much more obliging, with a superb male Black Redstart a little more distant.

After spending some time, and sipping on a cup of tea, in this spot, we made our way slowly downwards. The area where we had left the tractor was in a grassy glade





containing a water spout emptying into a trough. This was a popular haunt for House Martins. More Snowfinches were seen in the glade, along with a pair of Alpine Choughs (adding to the pair of Red-billed Choughs higher up). The brow of the hill further on was host to a small groups of Red-fronted Serins, looking stunning with the bright red forecrown contrasting with the dark head. The walk down to the car took over an hour, and was a real strain on the knees, with the steepness and the loose ground both playing their part. However, we did add at least 3 Finsch's Wheatears to the list – a species which Basar had said was in lower numbers than usual this Spring.

The afternoon promised a lot as well, with a trip to the Chromium Mine on the other side of Demirkazik on the cards, and the potential of White-throated Robin. It was fairly straight forward to find, taking a right on to a track just before a village beyond the car parking space at the entrance to Demirkazik Gorge. However, the track deteriorated some distance before the mines parking area, and in addition to numerous large rocks eager to take a chunk out of the chassis, the front wheel drive car spun wheels on the rocky track up one hill too many. After a tricky 5 point turn, we descended back to the slopes along the earlier track, and spent some time looking around here for birds. Isabelline Wheatears were as common as in other areas, along with its Northern cousin. After a Long-legged Buzzard over and Red-backed Shrike just up from the roadside, I spent some time trying to pin down an Ortolan Bunting singing from the slopes. This took longer than anticipated due to the fact that it wasn't perched anywhere obvious, but singing from the ground amongst the vegetation.



Before returning again to Demirkazik Gorge, we spent a short time near to the village at the end of the Chromium Mines track, sweeping up Serin and Grey Wagtail, and an abortive attempt to lure out Common Quail (although 2 Hobbies passed overhead late on). The gorge wasn't in the warm evening glow of the day before, with threatening grey clouds this time. It also seemed that the birdlife was quieter – at least during the first part of the walk. Not as many Alpine Swifts were overhead, along with fewer Crag Martins. The Golden Eagles, however, had doubled in number to two – the sight of a Lesser Kestrel trying to take on one of these behemoths was impressive. One or two new birds for the gorge (our list that is!) were added – Red-fronted Serin, Rock Bunting, Goldfinch, and a family party of Great Tits.

Before returning to Ozsafak, we went back along to the ski centre again (where we parked the car this morning to switch to the tractor). Before tracking down what turned out to be a Lesser Whitethroat skulking in the sparse bushes, we picked up a light grey mantled larger falcon which also had a rusty crown – Lanner was the call, although some trip reports may have mentioned a Peregrine variant from Turkey with this colouration.

### **Towards Emli Bogazi (near Cukurbag)**

*(Day 3)*

The plan this morning was to drive right on a small track out of the Ozsafak Pension and across the open plains for about 10 km to the wooded valley of Emli Bogazi, where Eagle Owls are reputed to hide. However, once inside the wadi just before the cut in the mountains, and just after the end of the open plains, we picked up a male White-throated Robin skulking from bush to bush. This was to be the first of at least 3 male robins (and a single female), and also the reason for staying here for three hours before moving back to the pension and leaving for Birecik. The views of the mountains at the head of the wadi, and the wadi itself, were enough reason to stop here, but the birds seemed to constantly spring up as we stayed. We spent some time trying to get better views of the robins, which by and large stayed under cover, and then picked up a singing



*Plains towards the wadi*



*Inside the wadi*

Eastern Orphea Warbler to the rear of the bushes. This was close to one of the two male Red-backed Shrikes here.

The track ran the full length of the wadi, and was flanked by the narrow flat base, which was sparsely covered by low lying bushes and some prickly ground cover. The cliffs on the South side held colonies of Rock Sparrow and Crag Martin, with choughs and a trio of separate Long-legged Buzzards overhead. Rock Buntings were frequently seen along the ledges and on the open rocks, as were a couple of Black Redstarts. There were probably two singing Eastern Orphea Warblers, with calling and singing Lesser Whitethroats common in the bushes. One of two Chukars made brief and scrambling (as they legged it) appearances, with one calling from the top of the ridge. A single lark was in the wadi – Lesser Short-toed Lark - and on the return across the plains, we found a single Tawny Pipit.

On this return, the odd wisp of cloud across the peaks was spectacular, with the sun bleaching out the low vegetation on the plains.

## **Birecik**

The journey from Cukurbag to Birecik was shorter (about 5 hours) and much different to the one to Cuckurbag two days earlier. The first 40km or so were on a minor road which was in the main being renovated, leaving the whole of the road in a state of disrepair during the process. The rest of the journey was on the newly built motorways, and at speeds of the regulation 120km/hour. There was very little chance of any birding from the car during this journey, although a Short-toed Eagle was seen flying over the motorway at one point.

Once in the very noticeably hotter Birecik, we quickly found the Motel Merkalem, just before the bridge over the Euphrates, and negotiated a price. We then headed out to find our bearings for the next morning, and found a couple of seats in the Gulhane Tea



rooms. We were immediately befriended by a chap who purported to be the "owl guide" for the establishment, and how lucky we were to find one of the few people there who spoke English! After a chat about the common language – football (always say you are a Fehnerbahce supporter here!), he took us to a tree next to the entrance, and after being unable to find one of the Pallid Scops Owls, told us that the tourists the previous evening who had used flash may have frightened them from their usual spot. However, with a little help from the



owner, one of the birds was found high up in the tree. The "guide" was pleased with this, and even more pleased with the TL30 (he had asked for TL40) for the pleasure of showing us this bird. A group of local kids also dragged us into the park next door, to point out a couple of Long-eared Owls – they were more insistent that we gave them money in response to this small task. We didn't, on the request of the "guide", but couldn't really see where the difference between the two lay.

## Birecik

(Day 4)

Birecik is well known for its Northern Bald Ibis captive rearing scheme, many of which are now allowed to fly freely (of which we had already seen some). The research centre is about 2km North of the bridge over the river, nestling next to a wadi which tracks North-east. It was this wadi which we chose for our early morning sorti, arriving there at 6am. The sky was predictably cloudless, with the temperatures warm, although a lot cooler than the maximum of 42°C we would see posted later in the day. Much of the wadi also was in shade, with a welcoming cooling breeze at times. We walked some way up (perhaps around 1km), passing through various widths between the rocks, the odd pool (often containing tadpoles), and also a small amount of vegetation. The main target bird here tends to be Seesee Partridge, but we didn't come across any signs. Most common sight and sound was that of Menetries Warbler, with at least 20 birds, including some singing males, and also some feeding young. There is also supposed to be a good population of Rock Sparrows here, but we only saw a handful. The other species regularly seen was Roller. They were sometimes in singles, but more often seen in small groups. One of their favourite pastimes was harassing the local Kestrels.



Kestrels – both Common and Lesser – were commonly seen, with the former having a nest in the rock face containing 3 well grown young. One surprise just before we turned back was a Red Fox on the slopes above the wadi. Overhead, small numbers of European Bee-eaters passed over, with a pair of Yellow-vented Bulbuls within the wadi walls flying through. As the entrance to the wadi was being approached, a couple of the Bald Ibises were found on the rocky ledge above.

Outside of the Bald Ibis research centre, in the small drinks kiosk, we came across Mustafa Culcuoglu, who is a self reported bird guide for the area. He calmly told us he could find the Seesee Partridges within 200m of the start of the wadi. He also contacted a chap called Ahmet Demir, who lives in Yeniakpinar village about 16km into the countryside, and could show us some of the rocky country specialities later that day (for the sum of TL130). We agreed to this, and then set off for the gravel pits on the other side of the river.

Temperatures by now were becoming high. The gravel pits cover quite a reasonable area, and so we selected one or two of the tracks through them on our search. Overall, bird life was quite quiet here, possibly due to the heat of the day. Many Reed Warblers could be seen and heard, with one Great Reed Warbler further on. Graceful Prinias were also in full song, with a buzzing noise not befitting their small stature. Early birds seen were a couple of Gull-billed Terns over, and a handful of Squacco Herons. One of the target birds to be seen here these days is Iraq Babbler, since they have only been seen regularly in the country for a few years. We thought they may have been easy to locate, but were fortunate to find three birds feeding in the depth of a bush next to one of the lagoons. They were reluctant in general to show well, but we put in enough time to see them to our satisfaction.



*Birecik Gravel Pits*

Lunch time now, and we picked out a restaurant just North of the bridge in Birecik, and ordered 3 mixed grills. They were fabulous, and probably enough to last until the next day! With the heat still very high, we decided it might be best to try to find the village where we agreed to meet Ahmet later in the day. We found what we hoped was the right place, although Mustafa had pointed out the presence of what we thought were “pines” just before the village, to find pylons instead. Ah, languages and translation. On the way back to the motel for a freshen up for an hour, we stopped at the side of the road for some time to watch small numbers of Finsch’s Wheatears, one pair of which was feeding young under a rock. However, our preplanning was to prove in vain, since the map that Mustafa had lovingly drawn for us wasn’t quite accurate enough, and we ended up in the wrong village at 5pm. We decided to revisit him at the kiosk, where he decided to show us the way himself. Thus it was that we were sat drinking a traditional yoghurt refreshment with Mustafa and Ahmet, planning to postpone the tractor birding trip to the following day.

## **Halfeti**

*(Day 5)*

There was a bit of déjà vu when we set off for Halfeti, since most of the road is the one we incorrectly traversed twice yesterday in our vain attempts to find Ahmet’s village. The views on the approach to Halfeti are impressive, with the village nestled on the edge of the wide expanse of the Euphrates (perhaps exaggerated by the presence of the dam some miles downstream!), and surrounded on most sides by steep craggy outcrops. The road ventures into a few “S” bends as it descends to Halfeti, and we parked the car before these to overlook the village, and spent 2 hours covering the slopes overlooking



the river. They climbed slowly up to crags which had a view of the cliffs on both sides of the river – apparently good potential for Bonelli’s Eagle and Little Swift, neither of which decided to make an appearance. On the other hand, Eastern Rock Nuthatches were literally everywhere, both in sight and in sound. We followed a couple by the roadside, and stumbled on a trio of Sombre Tits. A pair of Finsch’s Wheatears were below where the car was parked, but only showed briefly. Our first gulls of the trip could be seen in small groups flying upriver, but were too distant to specifically identify.



Before we left this area, we watched one of a pair of Hoopoes demolish a large green dragonfly on a flat rock.

The better birding was at the top of the hill, about 2km back again from Halfeti. This area is bounded on both sides of the road by orchards, and was very productive. We were initially stopped by a Woodchat Shrike on the wires – this turned out to be the first of quite a few in the vicinity. We were then alerted to the presence of a few Rufous-tailed Bush Robins, singing from within the orchards. One of these was being constantly harassed by a mid sized grey warbler – a similar bird was later identified as Upcher's Warbler. Hoopoes continued to be commonly seen, and many may have been feeding young. We then found a track which led away from the main road to the North, and dug up a few pairs of White-throated Robins, and more Rufous-tailed Bush Robins. A slight detour into one of the fields found what may have been a small family party of Desert Finches – this species was confirmed later before returning to the car.



We also drove towards the lake which was present due to the dam (which seemed to be off limits). Being Sunday, this area was very busy with locals, and thus not busy at all with birds, so we decided to make our way back to Birecik and force ourselves to sample more of the delights of the İkinci Bahar restaurant for lunch – and it didn't disappoint for the second day!

### Yeniakpınar with Ahmet Demir

After our "tour" with Mustafa last evening, we were at the correct place this time for our tour of Ahmet's land behind his farm. Yeniakpınar is about 16km to the North of Birecik, and only took us about 25 minutes to reach from the motel. We were early, and it became apparent that we would be having company – a couple of Dutch birders had also signed up for the tour. In the time before our departure, we picked up a Golden Eagle soaring over the farm. This was to be in a tractor – our second of the trip - and made the one for the Snowcock seem luxurious. Ahmet had strapped a few wooden benches into the trailer, and the stony ground made this an uncomfortable ride. Also, Mustafa tried to insist that we go the previous evening, even though our wanderlust had left little time for this. The fact that we were out and about for about 3 hours justified our decision.



*Hills to the South of Ahmet's farm*



*Open ground to the North*

The track veers from the "main road" quite quickly, and we notched up Seese Partridge and a very pale Little Owl almost immediately. We then started to climb, and this was where the bumpy ride began in earnest. Larks were commonplace, but only singles of

Short-toed and Bimaculated were specifically identified (as well as numerous Crested) before reaching the top of the ridge. Here we disembarked from the trailer (no resistance to this), and added Lesser Short-toed Lark – the first of many. Ahmet scanned the horizon with his telescope, and after glimpsing Black-bellied Sandgrouse flying past, located the first of a handful of Cream-coloured Coursers. Despite these being some distance away, they were still a very welcome find – one which we had waited some years for! Constant observation of these found the odd extra bird, as well as one or two Black-bellied Sandgrouse on the ground. While sifting through the larks, the bee-eater like call of Desert Finch was picked up, and the birds themselves found on the ground. Ahmet then pulled off a magic stunt by finding the nest of one of the pairs of Lesser Short-toed Larks, hidden well on the ground.

The return to the farm was by a different route, and seemed even longer and more bumpy than the first. We continued to scan the larks, and also came up with 2 more Seesee Partridge. Back at the farm, we enjoyed a cup of tea before making our way back to the hotel.

## Durnalik

(Day 6)



After some deliberation, we decided to travel to Durnalik from Birecik, rather than stay overnight in Gaziantep, and to travel back to Birecik lunchtime, with an extra night at the Motel Merkalem (no problems keeping the same rooms, and the manager didn't argue against us offering TL70 for the night for both rooms). The journey from Birecik to Durnalik is only about an hour, and the site is easy to find (60km along the motorway, coming off at junction 12), and joining the D400 through Yesilce. I had wondered why the satellite map from Google didn't look quite right in relation to the older maps we had from Gosney, etc, but the reason was obvious on arrival at the village. A brand new white track had been created for the lorries which were serving what looked like a quarry in the distance. Despite this meaning more noise, there was also a huge benefit – we drove just over 1km up this track, and parked on the right. This meant that we were right in the centre of the prime habitat for some of the key species, rather than parking next to the village and walking up the old track and then further on up the slopes.

It was immediately obvious that the orchards next to the where the car was parked were going to be productive. Woodchat Shrike was as usual in the open, but a bit of patience also drew out White-throated Robin, Eastern Orphean Warbler, singing Black-headed Bunting, and Eastern Olivaceous Warbler. The orchard was good for Western Rock Nuthatch, while the crags above (to the South-east) were even better for Eastern Rock Nuthatch. Other calls from these crags were too much of a pull, so I scrambled up the rocky ground. The initial reward was groups of Linnets, but after some more trudging, the first of a couple of singing male Cinereous Buntings was located.

So then it was back down to the open area next to the orchards again. The first Wheatear seen was Black-eared, but some patience also then found a pair of Red-tailed Wheatears. They were fairly bold, allowing close approach in the open ground, and after some time, they were seen to be feeding at least 2 fully fledged young. While watching,



an Olive-tree Warbler also seemed to be feeding young nearby, with an Upcher's Warbler further back. The orchard was good for White-throated Robins, with 2 males in a dog fight, and also a male Desert Finch.

Walking down the old track for a short distance, a couple of Woodpeckers in the same tree turned out to be two species: Syrian and Middle Spotted. Then the excitement! A scolding Lesser Whitethroat was creating a kerfuffle for a reason. A black snake, about 1½m in length, was draped over branches within the bush. On closer inspection, we found the head end (not easy in the thick of the bush), and saw that it had an orange throat. The black scales on the back glistened with the sunshine which managed to percolate through. Later research proved this to be a Black Whip Snake. Moving on, and an Ortolan Bunting was singing above us, an Upcher's Warbler showy, and a third Cincereous Bunting was near to the car.

Before leaving, we parked the car a short way along the old track, and located the spring a short way up. Ignoring the local kids having a plodge, we turned to the right (downstream), where we found the path a little flooded, and a magnetic area for drinking birds. Amongst these were Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, Black-headed Buntings, and Upcher's Warbler.



After returning to Birecik and just before our now traditional lunchtime visit to the Ikinchi Bahar restaurant, we had stopped off at the bridge on the motel side of the river to look for Dead Sea Sparrows amongst the numerous House Sparrows. After a little bit of searching in the high heat, we managed to pin down 2 males and a female.

### South of Birecik

Once the high temperatures of midday and early afternoon at Birecik had subsided to some degree, we decided to explore the Euphrates to the South. We took the road which passed the Gulhane tea rooms, and kept on this cobbled road until it ended at a gate. A left turn was made on to a track through the houses to some blocks of apartments, and then a right turn. After 3.3km (as measured from the bridge) we took a right turn through a fence, which immediately climbed up on to the track which was to progress South along the East bank of the Euphrates. This first part also bounded the "ponds", which were indeed one or two ponds with the characteristic brackish smell of salt pans,



but mainly a few islands in the river, which seemed to make side channels which at first glance looked like lagoons. There was much unfulfilled potential here. Some birds were present, but not nearly as many as could be expected from this type of habitat. Squacco Herons were obvious and flighty, with a single Glossy Ibis present early on. A female Red-crested Pochard didn't stay long, but a couple of Ferruginous Ducks landed later. The only waders of note were a trio of Little Ringed Plovers, with a couple of *feldegg* Western Yellow Wagtails nearby. Only a couple of Pygmy Cormorants were on the lagoons, but were constantly flying

over.

We then drove further on this track, which continued to the 10km mark, and skirted the shore of the river. Birds here were sporadic – Gull-billed Terns, Little Egrets, a few Rollers, some Bee-eaters, and more Pygmy Cormorants passing by upriver. The track

joined a tarmac road, and we decided to continue on (towards the Syrian border!) to the 20km mark, since we had been told that there may be some more gravel pits there with the potential of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters. However, no evidence of either was found, so we turned back and returned the same way. Main bird of interest was a single Stone Curlew which was on a small shingle beach on the banks of the river.

### **Birecik Gravel Pits**

*(Day 7)*

Having only been to the gravel pits in the heat of the day, we decided to spend the last morning here again, but hopefully in somewhat cooler temperatures, and also with less of the works traffic going past. Both worked. We initially went past the main gravel pits, towards the workings at the end (which was also at the bend in the river). This was the best spot for close views of European Bee-eater, which were hawking dragonflies from the water and then landing on the reeds. We spent some time here, and this also gave time to dig out a couple of Iraq Babblers.

After spending some time here, we headed back to the main pools, parked up the car, and wandered around for some time. Dead Sea Sparrows were much more evident than on the first visit, and a small party of Iraq Babblers was found in a similar place, but more in the open this time. A couple of Great Reed Warblers were again singing from the reeds, and an unexpected Menetries Warbler was closer to. For the first time, a Pied Kingfisher flew over the pools, caught a fish, and headed in a straight direction back towards the gravel pits workings. As we walked back, we also had 3 Little Bitterns flying over the reeds. 2 landed next to one of the pools, giving distant views of one of the birds.

With the heat rising and bellies calling, we popped into the graveyard back along the track to search for Yellow-throated Sparrows. House and Dead Sea Sparrows were abundant around the large site, but no sign of the more mundane quarry. However, a singing Rufous-tailed Bush Robin was more than adequate compensation.

### **Goksu Delta**

Another long but decent journey from Birecik found us quite some way West, in the small resort town of Tasucu, the base for the Goksu Delta. The roads were a lot more acceptable than the initial part of the first leg to Birecik, with a lot of the driving on motorways. All but the last 80km or so, which were on the E400, which passes through a lot of faceless and slow moving towns. Since Tasucu is a resort type of town, there is a reasonable choice of accommodation. There are three obvious hotels on the through road, with more in the centre of town. We were happy with our choice on the main road of the Hotel Fatih, since it had working air conditioning and also free wifi (and the rooms were clean and basic but more than served our needs).



The heat of the day had subsided by the time we went in search of the Goksu Delta. A little has changed since the publication of the Gosney guide – we turned on to the track next to the derelict paper factory opposite an orange “TTNET” sign, and noticed that the



Delta was also signposted here (the one and only sign). This track followed a dry man made concrete "canal" to the left, and the bridge over this was eventually met. The best way is then to go straight on over the bridge, and then turn right after 100m through the centre of the holiday village. This eventually got us on to the old airstrip. A short way after the end of the airstrip, the observation tower was clearly signposted, and we turned left down the track to investigate. There was a nice cooling breeze at the tower platform, and the extent of the lagoons could clearly be seen. Apart from a couple of distant Mute Swans and ducks spp shimmering in the heat, the only excitement was a female Marsh Harrier, marked with unusually white shoulder patches. A calling finch caused some consternation, due to its unusually large convex curved upper mandible, but this turned out to be a young Greenfinch.

The majority of the track which we followed was bounded to the left by reed fringed lagoon, and on the right by open scrub. Most of the birds were on the lagoon side, but a couple of White Storks and small numbers of Spur-winged Plovers were to the scrub side. The birds at the edge of the lagoon were mainly Kentish Plovers, with smaller numbers of Purple Heron, Little Egrets, Great White Egret, and Ruddy Shelduck. A single Temmick's Stint was picked out of a handful of Kentish Plovers. One of the latter took off to hassle an overflying Marsh Harrier.

### **Goksu Delta**

*(Day 8)*

Early morning found us skirting the airfield again at the Goksu Delta area. The main quarry this morning was to be Black Francolin, which was just as well, because birdlife in general was rather quiet. However, we turned off to the marked bird observation hide (after the main observation tower), and walked to the hide itself. This was a waste of time, since it merely looked out on to overgrown reeds in front of it. However, as we turned to return to the car, a Black Francolin started calling not far into the well vegetated sand dunes. We trudged through this, and managed a sneaky glance as it retreated into the undergrowth. Slow progress was then made along the main track, and a second bird was seen on the horizon of the dunes, before it also disappeared,

We made our way to the open lagoons, to find the waders quieter than the previous evening. Lower numbers of Spur-winged Lapwings were around, with no Kentish Plovers on show at all. 2 Purple Herons, 2 Grey Herons, and a Little Egret were feeding close in. Rather than follow the main track towards the peninsular end, and the second lagoon, we took the left fork (carefully) to the small channel, where we could go no further. The observation hide here is more than a little unstable, and the only extra birds for the day were a small group of Ruddy Shelduck. Making our way back, a much closer Black Francolin was calling from a mound on the seaward side of the track, but yet again disappeared after a few seconds. The fourth and best bird wasn't far short of the airstrip, and this time spent much longer calling and in view – even if this was showing just the head and neck from behind its bush.

We then made our way a couple of km to the East and took a track to the South opposite a tyre repair shop (with "Goodyear" signs all over it!). This was to follow a wet reeded channel for some distance, and is reputed to be good for crakes. We didn't manage to find any – only birds of note were Reed & Great Reed Warblers, and Yellow Wagtails. We eventually came to a smallholding, where we turned left to find three what looked like man made fishing pools alongside a building. This was great for stunning views of Black-crowned Night Heron, and also held Purple and Grey Herons. A stop off at the graveyard on the way back found only House Sparrows.



## Akseki

The journey to Akseki from Tasucu proved uneventful, taking more minor roads (but still generally of good quality) via the interior rather than the coast road. A stop at Karaman however, found an excellent restaurant on the bypass. Akseki is a tad larger than we had thought, but still constitutes a village rather than a town, and we found the choice of hotels on the main street without too much trouble.

The first location visited here was the walled orchard on the other side of the main highway to Akseki. The pension which was originally opposite the turn for this must have changed hands, since it is now known as the Toros. The old road opposite here was found, but after a kilometre, we could just see the tops of the trees in the plantation due to a new road being constructed. We climbed up and over this, to the old track on the other side, where the plantation was now in full view to the left. We parked the car in the field next to this, and walked around the periphery. Birding was difficult, since the deciduous trees within the wall are very dense. A Steppe Buzzard over was no problem, as was a Masked Shrike perched in the lower bushes near to the wall. However, the chirruping of Eastern Bonelli's Warblers from the canopy was much more difficult to pinpoint, until a small group were pinned down again away from the wall.



*Walled plantation*



*Forest to the North*

With the day drawing to a close, we decided to try for the location of the Forest to the North of Akseki back up the highway, mainly to ensure we knew the location for a morning sorti. We found the tap to the left of the highway after 15.4km from the Akseki junction, but the old track, parts of which can still be seen, has been replaced by a new tarmac road. The clearing to look for nuthatches and woodpeckers is 2.8km on the left of this road. We spent a small amount of time here, and quite quickly located calling Kruper's Nuthatches. In addition, a Western Rock Nuthatch was a little of a surprise, with singing Serin at the tops of the conifers. One extra addition to the area list was a tortoise.

## Akseki

*(Day 9)*

The first 4 hours of the morning were spent beyond the village, working the conifers for woodpeckers and nuthatches. This track represented what was once the main road to Konya – hard to believe now, when we had to regularly edge the car forward over ruts and potholes sprouting in front of us. Our parking spot was found 7.9km East from the end of the village, next to a hollow in the hill, and we walked around the bend to enter the forest on a track next to a very old chevron sign. Just before this, we had a bunch of Kruper's Nuthatches buzzing around our heads in the conifers next to the road. These were to be very common in the forest, as opposed to woodpeckers, which didn't show at all.

The best section of the forest was about 200m in, when we came across a good assortment of various birds. This was again kicked off by Kruper's Nuthatches, but with





patience, we also picked up Coal Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper, Goldcrests, and a singing Serin. One of two Mistle Thrushes was also around, and we had one or two flypasts of Red Crossbills. We did venture further along the track to a couple of very picturesque but quiet glades – calm and peaceful but no bird life!

It was time to sample the breakfast which came with the room rate at the Star Hotel, but we were delayed at the open hillsides about 2.5km short of Akseki. Open windows revealed singing Cretzschmar's Buntings on either side. We not only managed to pick these out on the hillsides, but taped one in very close to where we were stood. While watching, a couple of male Ruppell's Warblers started chasing each other and singing from the bunting's ex bush, with a Black-eared Wheatear to the rear. Time was called when three lorries full of sheep pulled up, and the woolly deluge was about to be let out on to the hills as we left.



After a fulfilling breakfast (Mediterranean style) we headed back to the forest North of Akseki. The Kruper's Nuthatches seemed quieter early on than the previous evening, but made up for this as time passed. One individual in particular was playing to the crowd, calling in the lower branches right in front of us. Serins were more in evidence, with at least 6 singing males, and a pair of Red Crossbills were feeding at least one youngster near to where we parked the car. This was also the location for a hawking Spotted Flycatcher, with a Long-legged Buzzard overhead. The only birds missing again were woodpeckers – not even a call in the distance.

With the time marching on, we decided to head for the graveyard in the village as our last port of call. This looked much more inviting than the one at Tasucu, being about the same size, but with good cover of both deciduous trees and conifers, and enough space between to see the birds. The most obvious birds were Syrian Woodpeckers, with at least 3 present, but even though we heard them regularly, and also saw them flying across, they were impossible to get close to. A pair of Masked Shrikes was similar, with the best views of one of the birds being at the top of one of the conifers. A family of Common Redstarts was a bit more approachable, being in the understory towards the centre of the plot, and a family of Long-tailed Tits passed through twice.

## SPECIES SEEN

### Caspian Snowcock

*Tetraogallus caspius*

This is one of the iconic species to see on a trip to Turkey. Some people choose to yomp up Demirkazik mountain themselves, and then camp overnight waiting for first light and the birds to start calling. We took the luxury option – a tractor ride (bumpy) and then a short climb up the mountain (still strenuous at this altitude), and then hike back down (not easy on the knees). We waited some time for the first birds to show, but a pair were found after about 50 minutes. A subsequent pair flew adjacent to top crags, then 1 was picked up on lower slopes

### Chukar Partridge

*Alectoris chukar*

1 on the plain towards Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi, and 2 separate birds within the Wadi

### See-see Partridge

*Ammoperdix griseogularis*

We tried in vain to find these ourselves in the wadi behind the Bald Ibis centre at Birecik. However, we had to wait until the tractor ride at Yeniakpinar to see 3 separate birds at Yeniakpinar

### Black Francolin

*Francolinus francolinus*

These are one of the birds that are high on the wanted list at the Goksu Delta. We were there early to look for them, and weren't disappointed when 4 birds were seen. Each one became more obvious than the last, although the fourth bird called mainly from behind a bush, only showing its head and neck

### Common Quail

*Coturnix coturnix*

2-3 heard in cultivated field near Demirkazik

### Mute Swan

*Cygnus olor*

2 Goksu Delta

### Ruddy Shelduck

*Tadorna ferruginea*

Pair with young and a separate further bird Goksu Delta; ~4 Goksu Delta the following day

### Mallard

*Anas platyrhynchos*

2 separate birds - 1 at Pools South of Birecik and 1 on Euphrates South of Birecik; 1 Goksu Delta

### Red-crested Pochard

*Netta rufina*

1 female Pools South of Birecik; ~4 Goksu Delta

### Ferruginous Duck

*Aythya nyroca*

2 at Pools South of Birecik; 6 flying North over Euphrates South of Birecik

### Little Grebe

*Tachybaptus ruficollis*

1 heard at Pools South of Birecik; 2 Birecik Gravel Pits

### Great Crested Grebe

*Podiceps cristatus*

3 on Euphrates South of Birecik; 2 Goksu Delta

### White Stork

*Ciconia ciconia*

3 separate birds on trip from Antalya to Cukurbag; 5 on lagoon on journey from Cukurbag to Birecik; 1 on journey from Birecik; 2 at Goksu Delta; 1 on journey from Akseki to Antalya

### Northern Bald Ibis

*Geronticus eremite*

The status of these as wild birds is debatable. The species apparently was extinct in the wild a couple of decades ago, but the Ibis Centre has been raising them at Birecik successfully. Within the confines of the colony, the birds breed in manmade boxes inserted into a cliff face. However, they then fly freely, and the first ones we saw were on the cliffs within the wadi behind the centre, as well as flying over Birecik







### Glossy Ibis

*Plegadis falcinellus*

1 at Pools South of Birecik



<b>Little Bittern</b>	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>
3 at Birecik Gravel Pits. One flew past us and onwards, the other were together and were located in the distance within the reed beds	
<b>Black-crowned Night Heron</b>	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
1 from bridge over the Euphrates (Birecik); 2 Birecik Gravel Pits; 4 Goksu Delta fish ponds. The latter birds were unexpected and stunning, since the fish ponds are relatively small and so the birds quite close. They were undaunted by our presence in the car, and the light enhanced their profiles	
	
<b>Squacco Heron</b>	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>
~6 Birecik gravel pits; ~12 at Pools South of Birecik	
<b>Western Cattle Egret</b>	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
1 on journey from Cukurbag to Birecik; 1 with cattle at Birecik gravel pits; ~40 with cattle on Track next to Euphrates South of Birecik; Group of 12 on journey from Birecik to Tasucu	
<b>Grey Heron</b>	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
1 Goksu Delta; 1 Goksu Delta fish ponds	
<b>Purple Heron</b>	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
2 Goksu Delta (2 Goksu Delta the following day); 1 Goksu Delta fish ponds	
	
<b>Great Egret</b>	<i>Ardea alba</i>
1 Goksu Delta	
<b>Little Egret</b>	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
2 at Birecik gravel pits; 2 birds over the river at Halfeti; ~15 over Euphrates South of Birecik; ~6 Goksu Delta; 1 Birecik Gravel Pits	
 <span style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle; text-align: center;">↑</span>  <span style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle; text-align: center;">↓</span>	
<b>Pygmy Cormorant</b>	<i>Microcarbo pygmeus</i>
Commonly seen around Birecik and along the River Euphrates	
<b>Black Kite</b>	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
1 North of Birecik, perched on a lone bush on the horizon while looking for Finsch's Wheatear	
<b>Short-toed Snake Eagle</b>	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
1 over motorway on journey from Cukurbag to Birecik	
<b>Western Marsh Harrier</b>	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
2 birds Goksu Delta; 1 Goksu Delta track the following day. All these birds had unusually white shoulder patches – those seen in the past in the UK have buff here	
<b>Common Buzzard</b>	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
1 over Akseki plantation	
<b>Long-legged Buzzard</b>	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>
2 together then 1 later on Kaynarca journey to Cukurbag; 1 on way back from Chromium	

Mines; 3 over Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; 1 Yeniakpinar; 1 on journey from Tasucu to Akseki; 1 over forest North of Akseki

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*

1 showing well in Demirkazik Gorge, being mobbed by Choughs and Lesser Kestrels, the a pair on second day again at Demirkazik over the Demirkazik Gorge; 1 Yeniakpinar circling above Ahmet's farm

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni*

Pair in Demirkazik Gorge, later hassling Golden Eagle; Pair at Demirkazik Gorge on second day again; Small numbers at Birecik Bald Ibis wadi

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

1 at Demirkazik Gorge on second day; Small numbers at Birecik Bald Ibis wadi (including a next in a hole in the cliff face with 3 almost fully grown young); 2 Yeniakpinar; Pair on Track next to Euphrates South of Birecik

**Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*

Pair over village near Demirkazik

**Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus*

1 with prey circled over Demirkazik. The light grey back and rust coloured crown could be seen clearly as it passed by with prey in its talons

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrines*

1 Halfeti

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus*

2 at Birecik gravel pits; 3 at Pools South of Birecik

**Eurasian Coot** *Fulica atra*

5 on Euphrates under main road bridge; Common on Euphrates South of Birecik; Some Birecik Gravel Pits

**Eurasian Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus*

1 flew from shingle beach on Euphrates South of Birecik

**Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus*

~16 Goksu Delta; ~6 Goksu Delta the following day



**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius*

3 at Pools South of Birecik

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*

~12 Goksu Delta (none were seen at the same stretch the following day!)



**Common Redshank** *Tringa tetanus*

1 heard Goksu Delta

**Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*

1 Goksu Delta feeding with Kentish Plovers

**Cream-coloured Courser** *Cursorius cursor*

This is a bird I had wanted to see for a long time! They do occur in the Birecik area, and some trips have found their own. However, to make a going bet of finding them, we hire the services of Ahmet Demir and his trusty tractor at Yeniakpinar, 16km to the North of Birecik. He duly delivered, even though the ~6 birds or so were a little distant



<b>Yellow-legged Gull</b>	<i>Larus michahellis</i>
1 over Goksu Delta	
<b>Gull-billed Tern</b>	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
2 over Birecik gravel pits; 1 over Pools South of Birecik; 6 over Euphrates South of Birecik; 1 over Goksu Delta	
<b>Common Tern</b>	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
1 over Euphrates South of Birecik with a small group of Gull-billed Terns	
<b>Black-bellied Sandgrouse</b>	<i>Pterocles orientalis</i>
At least 6 Yeniakpinar. 2 pairs were seen in flight, but two single birds were also picked out on the dry rocky terrain in the same area as the coursers	
<b>Rock Dove</b>	<i>Columba livia</i>
There are many of these in the Birecik, and there is even a colony on the cliff face in Birecik town. The status of this species is often in question, but my feeling is that the uniform plumage of these birds may indicate that they were truly generally of wild origin	
<b>Common Wood Pigeon</b>	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
2 on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; 4 together in Birecik Bald Ibis wadi	
<b>European Turtle Dove</b>	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>
1 near Demirkazik; Pair in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; Few around Birecik; Quite common around Yeniakpinar; Few at Durnalik	
<b>Eurasian Collared Dove</b>	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Quite a few on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; Quite common on journey from Cukurbag to Birecik; Good numbers around Birecik; Common around Yeniakpinar	
<b>Laughing Dove</b>	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>
1 near Kaynarca on Cukurbag drive; Few around Birecik; Quite common around Yeniakpinar; Few at Durnalik	
<b>Common Cuckoo</b>	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
1 heard near Demirkazik; 1 heard in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; 1 heard Birecik Gravel Pits; 1 heard Akseki plantation	
<b>Pallid Scops Owl</b>	<i>Otus brucei</i>
This is another of those "must see" birds on a trip to Turkey. This one is particularly notable because they are seen at the Gulhane tea gardens at Birecik, where local Turkish men partake of drink, chatter, and table games. We were not surprisingly accosted immediately by a chap congratulating us on finding one of the few people in the gardens who speaks English (lucky us!). And what's more, after a little idle football chatter, he could point out where the owls were likely to be. It was a bit of a struggle finding the bird near the top of the tree next to the entrance, but we managed to peer through the leaves to find it in the end	
<b>Eurasian Scops Owl</b>	<i>Otus scops</i>
1 heard dusk at Ozsafak pension, Cukurbag	
<b>Little Owl</b>	<i>Athene noctua</i>
1 from tractor at Yeniakpinar, and a second one on wires as we left; 1 on Track next to Euphrates South of Birecik	
<b>Long-eared Owl</b>	<i>Asio otus</i>
Pair in small park next to Gulhane's Tea House, Birecik	
<b>Alpine Swift</b>	<i>Tachymarptis melba</i>
Large colony flying around Demirkazik Gorge; Small numbers over Demirkazik Gorge on second day; 1 over cliffs in Birecik town	
<b>Common Swift</b>	<i>Apus apus</i>
Quite common on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; Quite common at Demirkazik; Common	



over cliffs in Birecik town; Fairly common Halfeti and Yeniakpinar

**Little Swift** *Apus affinis*

At least 1 in *hirundine* flocks over Euphrates

**European Roller** *Coracias garrulous*

~20 in Birecik Bald Ibis wadi, and ~4 at Birecik gravel pits; 1 Halfeti; 4 on Track next to Euphrates South of Birecik; 1 over Birecik Gravel Pits on second visit there

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis*

1 caught fish at Birecik Gravel Pits

**European Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster*

~8 over Birecik Bald Ibis wadi; 2 over Pools South of Birecik; 4 on Track next to Euphrates South of Birecik; 8 feeding at Birecik Gravel Pits; 2 over Birecik Gravel Pits



**Eurasian Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*

3 separate birds on trip from Antalya to Cukurbag; 2 in Birecik area, 1 at Birecik gravel pits; 2 on ridge at Halfeti; at least 10 in orchards above Halfeti; 5 on Track next to Euphrates South of Birecik; ~4 Birecik Gravel Pits; 2 on journey from Tasucu to Akseki

**Middle Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos medius*

1 at Durnalik in same tree as Syrian Woodpecker

**Syrian Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos syriacus*

1 in orchards above Halfeti; 1 on return from Halfeti; 2 separate birds at Durnalik; 3 at Akseki graveyard

**Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*

Pair and 2 separate males on Kaynarca to Cukurbag journey; 1 on track from Chromium Mines, and 3 more near Demirkazik; 1 pair and 2 separate males in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi



**Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor*

3 separate birds near Kaynarca (on way to Cukurbag)

**Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator*

1 in countryside North of Birecik; At least in orchards above Halfeti; 1 Yeniakpinar; 2 pairs Durnalik; 1 on journey from Birecik to Tasucu; 2 on journey from Tasucu to Akseki



**Masked Shrike** *Lanius nubicus*

1 at Akseki plantation; Pair in Akseki graveyard



**Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*

1 Heard from Ozsafak Pension

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius*

1 bird on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; 1 at Forest North of Akseki; 1 at Forest East of Akseki



<b>Eurasian Magpie</b>	<i>Pica pica</i>
Common on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; ~6 at peak of Demirkazik Gorge; ~6 on journey from Tasucu to Akseki	
<b>Red-billed Chough</b>	<i>Pyrhacorax pyrrhacorax</i>
At least 1 identified amongst Choughs in Demirkazik Gorge; Common around Demirkazik; Presumably these fairly common over Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi	
<b>Alpine Chough</b>	<i>Pyrhacorax graculus</i>
At least 2 identified amongst Choughs in Demirkazi Gorge; Fairly common around Demirkazik	
	
<b>Rook</b>	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
3 on journey from Antalya to Cukurbag	
<b>Hooded Crow</b>	<i>Corvus cornix</i>
~20 seen on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; 2 seen around Demirkazik; Odd birds on journey from Cukurbag to Birecik; ~6 around Birecik; Common around Birecik; Odd one on journey from Birecik to Tasucu	
<b>Northern Raven</b>	<i>Corvus corax</i>
1 on journey from Tasucu to Akseki	
<b>Sombre Tit</b>	<i>Poecile lugubris</i>
3 in party at Halfeti; 2 at Durnalik	
<b>Coal Tit</b>	<i>Periparus ater</i>
Few at Forest East of Akseki; 2 at Forest North of Akseki	
<b>Great Tit</b>	<i>Parus major</i>
A family of ~8 in Demirkazik Gorge; 1 in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; 1 at Durnalik	
<b>Calandra Lark</b>	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>
At least 2 identified amongst other larks on Kaynarca to Cukurbag journey	
<b>Bimaculated Lark</b>	<i>Melanocorypha bimaculata</i>
At least 16 identified amongst other larks on Kaynarca to Cukurbag journey; At least 12 at Yeniakpinar	
	
<b>Greater Short-toed Lark</b>	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
1 Yeniakpinar	
<b>Lesser Short-toed Lark</b>	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>
Quite common at Yeniakpinar	
<b>Crested Lark</b>	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Quite common on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; Few on journey from Cukurbag to Birecik; Quite common in countryside around Birecik; Common at Yeniakpinar; few along Track next to Euphrates South of Birecik; Common Birecik Gravel Pits; Common Goksu Delta and journey from Tasucu to Akseki	
<b>Woodlark</b>	<i>Lullula arborea</i>
1 in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi	
<b>Eurasian Skylark</b>	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
Heard at least 3 singing on Antalya to Cukurbag journey	
<b>Shorelark</b>	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>
3 birds on Kaynarca to Cukurbag journey; 8-10 on descent from Demirkazik Mountain; 1 near to Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi. The birds here have pronounced "horns" and	

pale faces lacking any yellow



**Yellow-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus goiavier*  
2 flew up Birecik Bald Ibis wadi; 1 flew from Birecik churchyard; 1 Goksu Delta; ~4 Goksu Delta

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia*  
~6 hawking around fields in arable land East of Konya; Few on journey from Cukurbag to Birecik; Very common around Birecik, especially gravel pits and over river; Quite common Halfeti by the river; Common Birecik Gravel Pits

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica*  
Quite common on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; Very common around Birecik; Common at Goksu Delta and journey from Tasucu to Akseki

**Eurasian Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*  
Small colony Demirkazik Gorge (~10 Demirkazik Gorge on second day); ~10 flying around Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi

**Common House Martin** *Delichon urbicum*  
2-3 on journey from Antalya to Cukurbag; ~50 around water pipe on Demirkazik Mountain; Very common around Birecik; Common Birecik Gravel Pits

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropis daurica*  
1 at Halfeti; 2 at Durnalik

**Cetti's Warbler** *Cettia cetti*  
1 heard at Pools South of Birecik

**Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus*  
Small family group circled Akseki graveyard

**Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus orientalis*  
~5 Akseki plantation

**Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*  
4 singing at Birecik Gravel Pits; 2 singing along Goksu Delta track

**Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon*  
1 Birecik Gravel Pits

**Eurasian Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*  
Common at Birecik gravel pits; 1 Goksu Delta; ~8 along Goksu Delta track

**Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** *Iduna pallid*  
Common around entrance to Birecik Bald Ibis wadi; 2 singing at Durnalik; 2 Birecik churchyard

**Upcher's Warbler** *Hippolais languid*  
1 in orchards above Halfeti; 2 at Durnalik. The birds definitely identified as this species all showed the characteristic tail swaying

**Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum*  
1 Durnalik

**Graceful Prinia** *Prinia gracilis*  
2 singing at Birecik gravel pits; 2 Birecik Gravel Pits; 1 Goksu Delta; ~4 Goksu Delta. Their characteristic sewing machine type of buzzing song often gave their presence away





<b>Iraq Babbler</b>	<i>Turdoides altirostris</i>
3 in bush at Birecik gravel pits; 2 + 3 Birecik Gravel Pits the following day. Due to the fact that this species wasn't seen in the country until recently, it remains on many a lister's wanted list. As babblers go, it isn't the most exciting, but was a little tricky to pin down. We found two small groups, one of which was in the same area on both visits to the gravel pits	
<b>Garden Warbler</b>	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
1 in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi	
<b>Lesser Whitethroat</b>	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
1 in scrub just above Demirkazik; ~10 in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; 1 scolding snake at Durnalik	
<b>Eastern Orphean Warbler</b>	<i>Sylvia crassirostris</i>
2 singing birds in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; 1 in orchards above Halfeti; 2 Durnalik	



<b>Menetries's Warbler</b>	<i>Sylvia mystacea</i>
Common in Birecik Bald Ibis wadi - at least 20; 1 Birecik Gravel Pits	
<b>Rüppell's Warbler</b>	<i>Sylvia ruppeli</i>
2 males on slopes towards Forest East of Akseki	



<b>Goldcrest</b>	<i>Regulus regulus</i>
~8 at Forest East of Akseki	
<b>Eurasian Wren</b>	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
1 heard at Forest East of Akseki	
<b>Krüper's Nuthatch</b>	<i>Sitta krueperi</i>
2 at forest clearing North of Akseki; ~12 at Forest East of Akseki; ~8 at Forest North of Akseki on the second visit. These birds are quite numerous in the coniferous forests, and when present, easy to locate by their busy calls	



<b>Eastern Rock Nuthatch</b>	<i>Sitta tephronota</i>
At least 1 definite bird of this species at Demirkazik Gorge; 1 bird flew over track in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; Abundant in crags above Halfeti; Good numbers on crags at Durnalik	
<b>Western Rock Nuthatch</b>	<i>Sitta neumayer</i>
3 at entrance to Demirkazik Gorge - more may have been amongst the other Nuthatches	

seen here; Few at Demirkazik Mountain; Small numbers around orchard at Durnalik; 1 at Akseki forest clearing

**Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria*

1 flew along crags at Demirkazik Mountain

**Short-toed Treecreeper** *Certhia brachydactyla*

1 at Forest East of Akseki

**Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*

Odd few on journey from Antalya to Cukurbag; Quite common at Demirkazik; Some on journey from Cukurbag to Birecik; Quite common around Birecik; Occasional Yeniakpinar

**Common Blackbird** *Turdus merula*

3 on journey from Antalya to Cukurbag; 3-4 around Demirkazik; ~6 in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; 1 in Birecik Bald Ibis wadi; 2 Durnalik; 1 at Akseki forest clearing; 1 at Forest East of Akseki; 1 in Akseki graveyard

**Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus*

3 at Forest East of Akseki

**Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos*

1 heard early hours at Demirkazik

**White-throated Robin** *Irania gutturalis*

The first birds found were relatively shy, and difficult to get good views of. From then on, those found were more showy, if not particularly approachable: At least 3 males and a female were in the Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; 2 males and female in orchards above Halfeti; 2 males Durnalik



**Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin** *Erythropygia galactotes*

At least 3 in orchards above Halfeti; 1 at spring Durnalik; 1 on Track next to Euphrates South of Birecik; 1 Birecik graveyard 1 on journey from Tasucu to Akseki

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*

1 at Demirkazik Mountain; 5 at Demirkazik Gorge; Separate male and female in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi

**Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

Pair with fledged young in Akseki graveyard

**European Stonechat** *Saxicola rubicola*

1 on journey from Kaynarca to Cukurbag; 1 above Demirkazik

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina*

Very common in open upland from Kaynarca to Cukurbag; Common around Demirkazik; ~4 on plains towards Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; 1 Yeniakpinar; 1 on journey from Tasucu to Akseki

**Northern Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe*

Pair and separate males on Kaynarca to Cukurbag journey; Common around Demirkazik

**Red-tailed (Kurdish) Wheatear** *Oenanthe chrysopygia*

Pair with 2 immatures Durnalik



**Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica*

The males seen were of both full black ear and also minimal black on the ear varieties.



These didn't seem to form populations, since both varieties were seen on the same slopes in Akseki - 1 early in journey from Antalya to Cukurbag; At least 2 males Durnalik; 2 on journey from Tasucu to Akseki; 1 near to Akseki plantation; Pair and separate male on slopes towards Forest East of Akseki

**Finsch's Wheatear**

*Oenanthe finschii*

At least 3 singing males on descent from Demirkazik Mountain; 3 males and a female in arid country North of Birecik Pair near to Halfeti



**Common Rock Thrush**

*Monticola satilis*

At least one pair with nest Demirkazik Mountain

**Blue Rock Thrush**

*Monticola solitaries*

3 males in fells early in Antalya to Cukurbag journey; 2 Demirkazik Gorge; Pair in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi

**Spotted Flycatcher**

*Muscicapa striata*

1 at Forest North of Akseki

**House Sparrow**

*Passer domesticus*

Abundant almost everywhere

**Dead Sea Sparrow**

*Passer moabiticus*

2 males and female Euphrates Bridge at Birecik; 2 small parties on Track next to Euphrates South of Birecik; Common Birecik Gravel Pits and also Birecik graveyard



**Eurasian Tree Sparrow**

*Passer montanus*

1 at Ozsafak Pension

**Rock Sparrow**

*Petronia petronia*

~8 in a mobile group on Kaynarca to Cukurbag journey; Small colony of ~20 birds in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; 2 in Birecik Bald Ibis wadi

**White-winged Snowfinch**

*Montifringilla nivalis*

~20 Demirkazik Mountain



**Radde's Accentor**

*Prunella ocularis*

5 at Demirkazik Mountain

**Western Yellow Wagtail**

*Motacilla flava*

All birds seen were of the black-headed *feldegg* race - 1 Pools South of Birecik; 2 Goksu Delta; ~10 Goksu Delta

**Grey Wagtail**

*Motacilla cinerea*

1 on stream near Demirkazik

**White Wagtail**

*Motacilla alba*

2 at hotel near Antalya airport hotel; 1 on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; 2 near Demirkazik

**Tawny Pipit**

*Anthus campestris*

1 on plains towards Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi



**Water Pipit**

*Anthus spinoletta*

1 very pale bird on descent from Demirkazik Mountain

**Common Chaffinch**

*Fringilla coelebs*

~4 at Akseki forest clearing

**Red-fronted Serin**

*Serinus pusillus*

A group of 8 on meadow at Demirkazik Mountain; 2 in Demirkazik Gorge

**European Serin**

*Serinus serinus*

Female near river near Demirkazik; At least 3 singing at Akseki forest clearing to the North of the village

**European Greenfinch**

*Carduelis chloris*

Pair in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; 1 at Birecik dam; Pair at drinking pool Durnalik; Family Goksu Delta; 1 at Akseki forest clearing; 1 Forest East of Akseki

**European Goldfinch**

*Carduelis carduelis*

Pair at entrance to Demirkazik Gorge; Pair in open country North of Birecik; 2 at Yeniakpinar; 2 Goksu Delta

**Common Linnet**

*Carduelis cannabina*

~6 either on singles or pairs on Kaynarca to Cukurbag journey; Fairly common around Demirkazik; Common at Durnalik

**Eurasian Crimson-winged Finch**

*Rhodopechys sanguineus*

At least 1 kept flying back and forwards at Demirkazik Mountain

**Desert Finch**

*Rhodospiza obsoleta*

Pair at orchards above Halfeti; at least 12 Yeniakpinar; 1 in orchard at Durnalik



**Red Crossbill**

*Loxia curvirostra*

7 in 3 groups flew over Forest East of Akseki; Female with 1 fledged young Forest North of Akseki

**Corn Bunting**

*Emberiza calandra*

~10 singing males on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; ~10 at lower elevations around Demirkazik; 1 singing in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi

**Rock Bunting**

*Emberiza cia*

Pair in Demirkazik Gorge; ~8 in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi

**Cinereous Bunting**

*Emberiza cineracea*

3 males Durnalik





**Ortolan Bunting**

*Emberiza hortulana*

1 on journey from Kaynarca to Cukurbag; 1 very close bird on slopes from Chromium Mines near Demirkazik; 1 singing male Durnalik

**Cretzschmar's Bunting**

*Emberiza caesia*

1 singing at the entrance to Demirkazik Gorge; 2 males singing on slopes towards Forest East of Akseki



**Black-headed Bunting**

*Emberiza melanocephala*

~12 singing males on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; ~5 singing males around Demirkazik; 3 singing males in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi; 1 singing in open country North of Birecik; 1 Yeniakpinar; 1 at orchards above Halfeti; 5 males and ~3 females Durnalik; Pair at Akseki plantation

**Common Reed Bunting**

*Emberiza schoeniclus*

4 Goksu Delta

**TOTAL SPECIES = 163**

**OTHER WILDLIFE**

**Black Whip Snake**

*Dolichophis jugularis*

1 Durnalik; 1 dead on road at Akseki

**Spur-thighed Tortoise**

*Testudo graeca*

1 Akseki forest clearing; 1 Akseki plantation

**Red Fox**

*Vulpes vulpes*

1 in Birecik Bald Ibis wadi

**European Hare**

*Lepus europaeus*

Pair in Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi

**Alpine Ibex**

*Capra Ibex*

Couple of small groups on Demiikazik mountain when looking for snowcocks

**European Ground Squirrel**

*Spermophilus citellus*

4 on Antalya to Cukurbag journey; ~10 around Demirkazik; ~4 on plains towards Wadi from Cukurbag to Emli Bogazi

